

"As we approach the planned drawdown of military forces beginning in July 2011, it is clear that large majorities of the American people have endorsed a new way forward in Afghanistan. According to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll, nearly two-thirds of Americans now say the war is no longer worth fighting and three-quarters of Americans believe that the President should withdraw a "substantial number" of combat troops this summer.

The American people understand that our country's fiscal state renders the continued funding of a war that costs over \$2 billion a week unsustainable. A substantial withdrawal of troops later this year will go a long way towards rebalancing our domestic and overseas priorities and reduce government spending by billions of dollars.

Despite the assurances offered by General Petraeus this week, we believe that our status quo, military-first strategy is not achieving its promised results. The rampant corruption present in the Karzai government and contractor community has made establishing a central government capable of administering effective governance all but impossible. Additionally, the record number of civilian deaths this past year, including the large number of targeted killings of government officials, suggest that the population is not being secured. If you can't protect the population or establish a government people can believe in, you can't win a counterinsurgency.

We are at a moment where the needs of the American people and the needs on the ground in Afghanistan have clearly converged. A swift withdrawal of troops beginning no later than July will stabilize Afghanistan by ending an unpopular occupation, allow us to focus on political reconciliation with local and regional stakeholders, improve our country's flexibility to respond to more immediate and pressing national security challenges, and improve our fiscal and economic situation at home."

Members of the Out of Afghanistan Caucus issued the following statement today following two days of congressional testimony by General David Petraeus on the war in Afghanistan. Signers: Representatives John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.), David Cicilline (D-RI), Keith Ellison (D-MN), Bob Filner (D-CA), Walter Jones (R-NC), Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), Michael Honda (D-CA), Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), Barbara Lee (D-CA), John Lewis (D-GA), Jim McDermott (D-WA), James McGovern (D-MA), John Olver (D-MA), Ron Paul (R-TX), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Rep. Jose Serrano (D-NY), Pete "Fortney" Stark (D-CA), and Lynn Woolsey (D-CA).

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